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# Preface

•101 Eastern Europe—the region embracing Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Rumania, and Yugoslavia, and for certain limited purposes the Soviet zones of Germany and Austria as well—has long been familiar to students of European history. To Western public opinion in general, however, this region has become known chiefly as a result of the two world wars, for which it provided some of the major diplomatic problems and military battlefields.

000 Despite the significant role of Eastern Europe, the Western democracies have tended to regard it primarily as a region of inherent economic poverty and political instability. They have failed either to recognize the extent to which its problems reflected their own policies, or to see it as an area vital to their security. This lack of understanding of the problems and significance of Eastern Europe was most conspicuous at the end of the Second World War. At that time decisions were reached and concessions made by the West on the basis of assumptions that were not firmly grounded in the realities of this region. Important lessons were eventually learned, but not until great harm had been done to the peoples of Eastern Europe and consequently also to the welfare of the Western democracies.

121 The purpose of the essays in this volume is to review the record of the recent past in order to interpret the many-sided

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# 6 Peasantism: Its Ideology and Achievements

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## I

That part of Europe which lies east of the Danzig-Trieste line is often referred to as "peasant Europe." This term indicates a twofold concept: Economically, "peasant Europe" stands for that part of the continent which is devoted primarily to agrarian production under the system of small and medium holdings and in which farming represents a tradition, a civilization, and a way of life. Sociologically and culturally, the term "peasant Europe" denotes an area in which by far the greatest portion of the population is peasant and forms a group whose economic, social, and cultural aspects have been genuinely preserved.

The differences between Eastern and Western Europe were less noticeable a hundred years ago than they were at the end of the Second World War. The industrial revolution which swept Western Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century generated profound economic and social changes over the continent as a whole, and contributed to its division into two distinct sectors. A consequence of this partition was the creation of unique social and economic conditions in Eastern Europe. These conditions, in turn, pro-

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# 7 Industrial and Social Policies Between the Wars

GEZA TELEKI

● 101 175 178 Eastern Europe, from the Baltic to the Aegean, is a security zone both for the states of Western Europe and for Russia. Besides acting as a safety valve for neighboring powers, this region is a passageway between them. Military and population movements fan out from here into the East or converge into the West.

Both West and East have accused this part of Europe of being unstable and backward. Both have wanted to influence it and have not wanted to admit that the backwardness, confusion, and instability of this area are in large measure due to power politics. Tribes, peoples, and states have changed and have been changed in this region throughout the centuries. As a result, there is no stability of boundaries, or of peoples and governments. The evolution of the region can be viewed as a mirror which reflects the history of Europe with all its quirks and irregularities.

Although both world wars began in Eastern Europe, it would be absurd to claim that they were caused solely by these nations and their problems. The social, economic, and political interests of the great powers which clashed in this area and influenced its peoples played an important role in the course of events in Eastern Europe.

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Because of this situation, the different peoples of this region turn three different masks to the world. One is always turned toward the West, one toward the East, and one is used for the stage show that these peoples put on for each other. If a nation of Eastern Europe takes off its mask, it may disappear from the stage forever. This is an important point to keep in mind in trying to understand the evolution of these countries.

Another important factor in the history of this region is that all the important ideologies and social revolutions have moved from West to East. Nationalism and the abolition of serfdom reached Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century. Industrialization advanced eastward at the end of the nineteenth century and during the first half of the twentieth. The closer a state was connected with the West, the sooner its transformation took place, while the other states were forced to develop in a comparatively short time in order to maintain their status as equals.

## I

As a result of the Treaty of Versailles, everything changed in this area of constant change—boundaries, minorities, administrations, politics, and economics. In spite of these changes, and this is most important, the Eastern European countries remained predominantly agricultural.

The proportions of populations dependent upon agriculture in the several states within a decade after gaining full independence were as follows: Albania, 80 per cent; Bulgaria, 75 per cent; Rumania, 72 per cent; Yugoslavia, 76 per cent; Poland, 60 per cent; Hungary, 51 per cent; and Czechoslovakia 33 per cent. In contrast to these figures, the percentages of gainfully occupied males in industry in the same period were: Bulgaria, 13 per cent; Rumania, 11 per cent; Yugoslavia, 14 per cent; Poland, 22 per cent; Hungary, 26